

# Town of Tiverton



## Economic Development Commission

343 Highland Road, Tiverton Rhode Island 02878

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### MEETING MINUTES / NOTES

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ORGANIZATION: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

DATE AND TIME: JULY 10, 2008 @ 6:00PM

LOCATION: TIVERTON COMMUNITY CENTER  
346 JUDSON STREET  
TIVERTON, RI 02878

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Chairman Len Schmidt was unable to call the regular meeting of the Tiverton Economic Development Commission to order at 6:00 P.M. due to a lack of quorum. Members present were: Len Schmidt and Steve Gilbert. Also present was Town Planner Chris Spencer. Due to the number of attendees, and the scheduling of two presentations, the Commission chose to proceed as an informal workshop, with no official actions taken.

#### **Item # 1 Call to order**

The Chair was unable to call the meeting to order due to the lack of quorum.

#### **Item # 2 Approval of Minutes**

Due to a lack of quorum, no vote could be taken on the minutes.

#### **Item # 3 Presentation – Virginia Thimas of US Small Business Administration of RI**

This item was taken out of order (after item #5).

Ms. Thimas was present to discuss the US SBA operations in Rhode Island. She stated that their main function was the promotion of small business activity. She noted that the SBA no longer acted as a lender, but did act as a guarantor with lending institutions. Ms. Thimas also stated that the SBA did not provide grants. She distributed a package of information including a sheet of grant related website addresses.

Ms. Thimas described resources available to small businesses (both existing and start-up), including:

- The Small Business Development Center, coordinated through Johnson & Wales University;
- SCORE, "Councilors to America's Small Business";
- Center for Women in Enterprise (which also helps men);
- Disaster relief;
- Small business advocacy through the Office of Advocacy and the Office of Ombudsmen; and

- Training in contracting opportunities with the federal government.

Audience member John DaPonte asked if the SBA got involved in attracting businesses to a certain community. Ms. Thimas replied that it was not really one of their functions. She suggested other resources, such as Every Company Counts, which is an initiative of the RIEDC (Economic Development Corporation). Mr. DaPonte asked if there were other communities that could act as models. Ms. Thimas stated that Warwick and Cranston both did a good job.

Ms. Thimas stated that the SBA does do walk-through's, in order to talk to people and find out what they need. Mr. Schmidt noted that the EDC was in the process of gathering their resources.

**Item # 4            Bourne Mill - Jan Brodie Armory Revival Co.**  
**4.1 Issues of community interface and synergy**

Ms. Brodie was unable to attend. This item will appear on a future agenda.

**Item # 5            Design Standards – review and update**  
**5.1 Chris Spencer, Town Planner and Peter Flinker of Dodson Associates**  
**to provide status and update.**

Mr. Spencer introduced Peter Flinker of Dodson Associates, who was the consultant for the Design Standards project. The Design Standards Project had been initiated to look at instituting new commercial development standards, with special attention to Main Road from Souza Road to the Fall River line. Mr. Spencer noted that the project was never completed. Part of the project would entail making recommendations for changes in codes and regulations.

Mr. Spencer gave a presentation regarding concepts for turning “roads” into “streets”. He noted that the purpose of a “road” was to move vehicles. A “street” also was sensitive to pedestrian needs. Mr. Spencer displayed scenarios where buildings were brought closer to the road and pedestrian facilities were installed. Mr. Spencer noted that there was a need for increased economic incentive for development / redevelopment of parcels along Main Road. He briefly discussed the Bourne Mill redevelopment, which should add critical mass for commercial uses.

Mr. Flinker gave a presentation regarding existing commercial development along Main Road, and possible lot layouts that could redefine the commercial areas. He stated that he had studied two specific areas, including the L'il Bear Restaurant area and the area surrounding the former Grand Central market. He noted that there were currently non-conforming residential uses within the commercial zone, and the Town would need to decide if these should be phased out or made conforming.

Mr. Flinker noted that the current zoning regulations forced the buildings back on the lot with parking in the front. He suggested that parking areas could be connected across lot lines, and entrances could be concentrated to avoid parking duplication.

Audience member and realtor Chee Laureanno asked how sewage treatment and delivery trucks would be handled in the scenarios depicted by Mr. Flinker. Mr. Flinker replied that public water and sewer would be needed. He stated that deliveries could be handled as they are in pedestrian centered towns such as Newport, with deliveries being done in the night or early morning hours. He added that deliveries would be a management issue.

Mr. Flinker described the process in other towns. He stated that other towns have developed design guidelines to give to developers. These guidelines are used during site plan review. Developers can

either ask the Planning Board for necessary waivers, or zoning can be changed. Mr. Flinker described, “form based zoning”. He stated that this type of zoning was more concerned with the arrangement and form of buildings than with the uses. Mr. Flinker noted that uses change over time, and durable buildings could be constructed to accommodate different uses. Mr. Flinker stated that the Town would need to come to an agreement on its desired plan. This form of this plan would then be put into the regulations. He stated that this process would be valuable for economic development, as the lots would basically be “pre-permitted”. Mr. Flinker stated that this would also allow more money to be spent by the developers on architectural detail and landscaping.

Mr. Flinker displayed examples of development and development plans in other communities, including:

- Concord, MA
- Hopkinton, RI,
- Mashpee Commons (Cape Cod),
- South Hadley, MA, and
- Jamestown, RI.

Mr. Schmidt asked if there was any data regarding business success in these example communities. Mr. Flinker replied that he did not know, but that Mashpee Commons was much like a destination shopping center.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the presentation and the future of Tiverton’s Design Standards Project. Mr. Spencer noted that the funding for the project was uncertain, since he had not been able to determine which grants had been received and which may be still available.

#### **Item # 6            Stone Bridge Committee – discussion of June 25, meeting**

Mr. Spencer briefly discussed the June SBC meeting. He stated that he was in the process of collecting files and determining what grant funds had been awarded and what was available. He noted that Keith Stokes of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce would be arranging for a site visit with Congressman Patrick Kennedy. He added that the SBC meetings were usually held on the third Thursday of the month at 6:00 PM.

#### **Item # 7            North Tiverton Initiative**

##### **7.1 Set up action team**

##### **7.2 Identification of available assists: Keith Stokes, Alex Bilouris, RIEDC, Roger Williams Small Business Institute**

##### **7.3 North Tiverton Plan – Chris Spencer**

Mr. Gilbert stated that the goal was to get a group together to look at the potential for business development in North Tiverton and how the pieces would fit together. He noted that economic development does not occur in a vacuum, and that the EDC would need the support of the community. He stated that a forum for community input was also needed.

Ms. Laureanno opined that the average income in Tiverton was a problem, and that development of the Industrial Park and creation of jobs was important. Mr. Gilbert noted the importance of population density, drive time and terrain. He noted that people do not like to walk up hill.

Audience member Bob Vermette noted that the town would continue to get the same results if they followed the same process. He noted the lack of sidewalks in town as an impedance to walking. Audience member Rosemary Eva noted the importance of the Comprehensive Community Plan. Audience member Scott Humphrey stated that the political atmosphere for change was needed. Mr.

DaPonte noted that action was needed from the State as well. He noted that laws that are a burden must be reviewed in order to make the business atmosphere attractive. Audience member Jay Edwards stated that unfounded mandates area also a burden to Town finances. A brief discussion ensued.

**Item # 8            EDC Website**

There was no discussion of this item.

**Item # 9            New and Future Business**

There was no discussion of this item.

Since this was not a formal meeting, there was no motion to adjourn. The meeting ended at 7:40 P.M..

*(Italicized words represent corrections made on the approved date.)*

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
                    Kate Michaud

Approval Date: August 14, 2008